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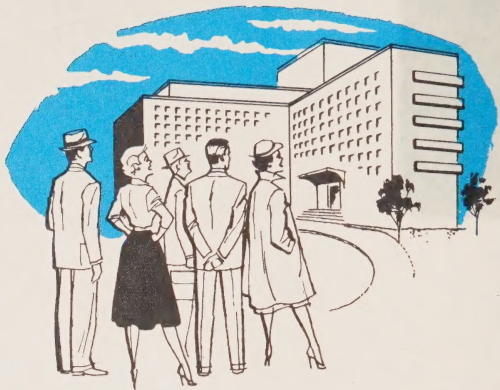
Government
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pportunities for Registered Nurses in the Mental Health Field



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THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE CHALLENGE

In recent years vast strides have been made in the public's understanding and general attitude toward mental and emotional illness. Great improvements, too, have been made in psychiatric treatments and in general, mental health services are much more accessible. Because of this, the number of people seeking psychiatric help continues to rise.

Playing a vitally important role in treatment is the registered nurse — particularly those who have had special preparation in the mental health field. The demand for nurses continues to grow and is unlikely to be met for many years to come. This shortage places a premium on the skill and ability of those who choose a career in this field. These nurses are called upon to help restore health to people for whom, a short while ago, there would have been little hope. But today, their future is much brighter. This is the opportunity and the challenge.

WHAT IS PSYCHIATRIC NURSING?

The registered nurse with additional psychiatric preparation provides sympathetic and understanding care for people during the acute and convalescent stages of their illness. She, or he, assists them to regain confidence and

ability to return to family and community life. To others, she gives support and encouragement as they strive to live at greater ease with themselves and their illness.

The nurse works in a variety of settings and institutions within the mental health field. Through the assistance of the National Health Program and increased expenditures at all levels of government, each province has substantially expanded its psychiatric services and facilities. Some people come for treatment and help to mental health clinics or child guidance centres. Some are treated in special day and night hospitals. Others are too sick to continue at work or look after the home — they are unable to face the problems of day-to-day living and need more intensive care in hospital. But whether in clinic or hospital, the nurse is an indispensable professional member of a psychiatric treatment team. In addition to the nurse, the team usually consists of the psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, and recreational therapist. Each of these workers pool their specialized knowledge and skill in the treatment of the individual patient. The progress of treatment, to a large extent, depends upon the nurse and her ability to create an atmosphere in which the patient will respond most favourably.

The field of mental retardation has special significance for the qualified nurse practitioner. Basic theoretical and clinical instruction with related experience in pediatrics, obstetrics, growth and development and appreciation of family relationships, fits the professional nurse





in a unique way to contribute to this aspect of mental health services.

THE NURSING ROLE

In mental hospitals and psychiatric wards or units in general hospitals, the nurse endeavours, through her understanding of the nursing care of sick people, to ensure an environment in which the patient will receive the greatest benefit from treatment. As the nurse develops her understanding of human behaviour and improves her skill in helping patients toward a better understanding of themselves, she increases her ability to contribute to their emotional well-being. Because she has the opportunity of guiding the patients in their daily program, she cooperates with the occupational therapist and recreational therapist in organizing constructive social and recreational activities, as well as stimulating valuable group discussions.

Registered nurses with psychiatric preparation are also assuming an increasingly important role in mental health clinics. Here, in addition to her general nursing responsibilities, the psychiatric nurse is an important member of the clinical team.

Public health services are expanding their generalized health programs to include more

and more preventive responsibilities for nurses in the mental health field, as well as giving valuable assistance in the rehabilitation of patients recently recovered from mental illness. Public health departments frequently employ a consultant mental health nurse to assist the regular nurses in their work with the mentally ill, and in the development of staff educational programs. The public health nurse plays her part through personal contacts with families, physicians, school teachers, ministers, employers and others regarding emotional problems. She encounters these problems in her day-to-day work and frequently helps decide whether or not to refer these cases to special agencies.

As she develops skills and understanding about the prevention and treatment of the mentally ill, and about the care and rehabilitation of the mentally retarded, the nurse grows and matures in her understanding and ability to cope more effectively with the retarded and mentally disturbed children and adults with whom she works in both residential institutions and community agencies. She also gains a more complete understanding of her own emotional problems and how best to handle *them*.



WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS?

Nursing in the mental health field offers wide and challenging opportunities for both men and women. The basic qualifications apply equally to both sexes:

- *A desire to understand human behaviour.* This is basic to all work in the mental health field.

- *An understanding of one's self.* The best nurses in this field are stable, well adjusted people whose additional education preparation and experience help increase their own self-understanding.

- *Interest in other people and their problems.* This means a healthy curiosity regarding people and how they live.

- *A good listener.* An important asset is the ability to listen to others, since psychiatric



treatment frequently involves allowing the patient to "talk it out".

- *A good team worker.* Treatment and eventual recovery depend to a great extent on the nurse's ability to work harmoniously with other members of the team toward a common goal.

With these qualifications, you will find a happy, satisfying future in the mental health field.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are interested in being educated as a nurse and make a career in the psychiatric

field, you should choose a good school of nursing where the program includes mental health and psychiatric nursing. Mental retardation should also be included in the curricula.

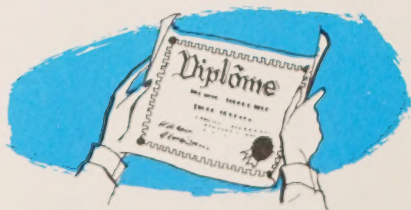
If you are now in a school of nursing, ask your director how you can gain experience in the psychiatric field. If you are about to graduate, or are a registered nurse without mental health and psychiatric nursing experience, enquire about the possibilities of obtaining a position in a mental hospital or the psychiatric unit of a general hospital. Most psychiatric hospitals have programs of orientation and training for new staff members which provide classes and supervised practice in psychiatric nursing.

Programs in mental health and psychiatric nursing are also available at several of the university schools of nursing located in major educational centers of each province. There are special grants, bursaries and scholarships available to nurses wishing to pursue post basic, baccalaureate, masters or doctoral degree programs.

Additional information may be obtained from the Registered Nurses' Association in your province, or the Canadian Nurses' Association, 50 The Driveway, Ottawa, 4, Ont.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information regarding employment opportunities, psychiatric facilities and services, etc., write directly to the Director of



Mental Health in your Provincial Department of Health.

Additional copies of this pamphlet as well as other mental health pamphlets and booklets, are available without charge from your provincial and/or local Department of Health.

Mental Health Division

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